

Defence at fault again—forwards also lack punch

Barking 3, Wycombe Wanderers 1.

THREE second half goals, resulting from Wycombe Wanderers' defensive errors, were enough to give Barking the points in this undistinguished Isthmian League clash on Saturday.

After easily containing the average Barking attack in the first half, the Wycombe defence crumpled wide-open to concede three "soft" goals—an unfortunate habit which they have developed this season.

But while the defence struggled, it is only fair to remark that the forwards were not much of an improvement. As Barry Darvill summed up: "There is no denying we are struggling. The team have lost confidence in themselves and I am as worried about the forward line as the defence."

Gerhard Trini once again deputised for the injured Maskell in goal and perhaps could be faulted for one of the goals. Up front, the forward line lacked punch and Tony Horseman looked sadly out of touch.

The first half was conducted at a leisurely pace and Wycombe might well have taken an early lead had Merrick's snap shot been just a few inches lower after Horseman had put him in possession.

After a period of negative football from both sides mid-way through the first half Wanderers clearly took the initiative just before the break. Gale forced the 'keeper to concede a corner with a low drive, and following this Howard saved brilliantly from Merrick when the centre-forward fastened on to a Baker pass inside the back.

BECK AT FAULT

However, four minutes after the interval Wycombe were behind. A low ball across the goal reached Warnes standing on the edge of the area, and while Beck stood off the home left-winger chose his spot with a glorious cross-shot. Trini got a hand to the ball but he could not divert it off course.

If the Wanderers were to salvage at least a point it was imperative they replied quickly and this they did two minutes later. Horseman latched on to a Baker pass and chipped the ball across for Holmes to head against the left-hand post and Samuels tapped the rebound home.

But after 59 minutes Wanderers were behind again—a goal which might have been prevented with a little more thought. Faulkner conceded a free-kick around the 25-yard mark, and the Wycombe defence failed to put up any kind of defensive "wall" and Fox cracked the ball into the right-hand corner.

Three minutes later Charlie Gale—easily the best defender and on occasions the best attacker—limped off with an instep injury, to be replaced by Paul Bates, with Keith Samuels dropping back into the left-half berth.

Barking put the issue beyond doubt in the 73rd minute with a goal which certainly had an element of luck about it. Faulkner conceded a further free-kick on the edge of the box. This time Wycombe built a "wall" but Evans' kick hit the top of Samuels' head and flew over the stranded Trini, who had started to move out and cut off the intended cross.

Wycombe Wanderers: G. Trini; J. Beck, I. Rundle; B. Baker, V. Faulkner, C. Gale; L. Worley, K. Samuels, L. Merrick, A. Horseman, S. Holmes. Sub.: P. Bates.